

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
PUBLIC INTEGRITY DIVISION
REPORT

CASE NUMBER: PI-18-00063

SUBJECT: Case Review

DATE: August 8, 2018

INVESTIGATOR: David Burlison

SYNOPSIS

Offender Michael Wilson (#29893) is a forty-seven year old white male who is from the coastal area of Mississippi. Offender Wilson has an extensive criminal history and has spent most of his adult life in and out of prison. Offender Wilson was sentenced to life in prison for two murders that occurred in 2012 out of Harrison County, Ms. Offender Wilson was assigned to the South Mississippi Correctional Institute (SMCI) in 2015 with a custody level medium.

During Investigator Burlison's investigation it was discovered that Offender Wilson had escaped from MDOC custody before back in 2001. Offender Wilson was a trustee inmate assigned to the George County Work Center. Offender Wilson was on a work detail when he walked away and escaped. Offender Wilson was discovered several days later in a residential area located in Jackson County.

NOTE: The residential area where Offender Wilson was discovered back in 2001 is the same area where he was located on July 7, 2018. The escape in 2001 was not a known fact to any law enforcement agency who was responsible for the search and apprehension of Offender Wilson.

Offender Michael Wilson escaped from the SMCI on July 5, 2018. Offender Wilson climbed two razor wired fences and walked off into the community of Leaksville undetected. It was not until two hours later before Offender Wilson was identified as absent by the SMCI staff. Offender Wilson after escaping, came into contact with several citizens (who had no knowledge of an escape).

Offender Wilson was able to make his way back to the coast undetected. On July 7, 2018

Offender Wilson was spotted and arrested in a residential area of Jackson County and returned to the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) custody. The search and eventual apprehension of Offender Wilson involved numerous law enforcement agencies (from several counties) and the MDOC.

On July 23, 2018 the MS AGO received a letter from Senator Dennis DeBar asking the AGO to conduct an immediate and official investigation into the escape of Offender Wilson from SMCI. Investigator David Burlison with the MS AGO was assigned this task by Chief Tony Green. On July 24, 2018 Chief Green and Investigator Burlison met with MDOC Commissioner Hall at her office to discuss the facts and circumstances of Offender Wilson's escape. Commissioner Hall advised Chief Green and Investigator Burlison the MS AGO would have MDOC complete cooperation and support in conducting their investigation. Chief Green advised Commissioner Hall the MS AGO would be looking into the facts of what happened after Offender Wilson climbed over the wire.

On July 25, 2018 Investigator Burlison traveled to Leaksville, Ms (where SMCI is located). Investigator Burlison met with Sheriff Mcleod of the Greene County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff McLeod reported the escape of Offender Wilson was the first time in twenty-eight years where an inmate actually climbed over the wire and escaped. However, Sheriff McLeod advised there have been several incidents in the past where trustee inmates have walked away from work details.

Investigator Burlison discovered there has been no cross-training (in the past) between the Green County Sheriffs Office and SMCI. Investigator Burlison also identified problems with Greene County and SMCI's ability to communicate with each other. Neither agencies share radio capabilities and currently rely on telephones to communicate. This lack of communication created major problems in establishing a proper perimeter which could have possibly contained Offender Wilson.

SMCI nor Greene County currently have any system (reverse 911) that notifies the public of an escape. The public was first alerted to the escape of Offender Wilson when SMCI personnel flooded the Leaksville area attempting to locate Offender Wilson. SMCI established road blocks and were searching vehicles (looking for Offender Wilson). The inability to properly inform the public about Offender Wilson's escape possibly could have led them to experience additional stress and anxiety and could have placed unsuspecting citizens in harms way.

According to Dispatcher Selina Pierce (Greene County Sheriffs Office) there was a high level of frustration dealing with SMCI during the escape. Ms. Pierce reported the information passed along to her from SMCI was limited and general in nature. Dispatcher Pierce expressed a high level of frustration because she called SMCI back on the phone several times (to get updated information) and had a hard time finding anyone who could provide any information. According to Ms. Pierce's Greene County took the initiative to alert the surrounding agencies about the escape. Ms. Pierce reports that she personally alerted the surrounding agencies of Offender Wilson's escape by phone and NCIC.



After escaping SMCI Offender Wilson was able to find a change of clothes in an abandoned house near the SMCI facility. Offender Wilson was able to catch a ride to the local hospital from an unsuspecting citizen. After entering the hospital (to get a drink of water) and leaving Offender Wilson walked the surrounding neighborhood undetected and was able to persuade an elderly lady to drive him to Lucedale, Ms.

On July 25, 2018 Investigator Burlison traveled to Lucedale Ms located in George County. Investigator Burlison met with Sheriff Keith Havard who reported that on July 5, 2018 his agency was notified by the Greene County Sheriffs Office about the escape of Offender Wilson from SMCI. Sheriff Havard described this notification as the only official notification his office received. Sheriff Havard reported his agency was updated by Greene County SO that Offender Wilson was heading to Lucedale. Sheriff Havard stated Greene County SO was able to give a possible vehicle description that Offender Wilson might be in. Sheriff Havard advised the vehicle was spotted and stopped by one of his road units. Sheriff Havard stated after questioning the driver he determined that there was a high possibility that Offender Wilson was inside of his county.

Sheriff Havard advised there was no SMCI leadership present in George County so he took charge and he immediately established a Command Center. Sheriff Havard stated he knew this to be a prudent thing to do, because it centralizes any and all information for a better response. Sheriff Havard advised he personally contacted Fish and Game, FBI, Highway Patrol (Trp J) and the U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force requesting assistance. Sheriff Havard advised all theses additional agencies have skills and resources he knew could be beneficial in locating Offender Wilson. Sheriff Havard mentioned he also informed his citizens about the escape through a reverse 911 system and social media. Sheriff Havard also contacted the local news outlets who reported to the Command Center to conduct live broadcast.

Sheriff Havard stated his department received several leads about possible sightings of Offender Wilson. Sheriff Havard advised he requested K9 support from SMCI (to assist in follow-up of theses leads) but there was a long delay in their response. Sheriff Havard stated nobody from SMCI ever joined him in the operation of the Command Center. Sheriff Havard advised that not having an SMCI presence led to a communication problem with SMCI personnel who were in the area.

Sheriff Havard stated after a lengthy search for Offender Wilson it was discovered that Offender Wilson had managed to obtain a ride (from an unsuspecting citizen) out of George County to the coastal area. Sheriff Havard stated he notified the appropriate agencies of this discovery and shut down his Command Center.

On July 26, 2018 Investigator Burlison and Investigator Tonya Mangus met with Lt. Rich Crager and staff at the Jackson County Sheriffs Office. Lt. Crager describes the escape of Offender Wilson and his subsequent arrest as situation where everyone involved is "lucky" that nobody got

hurt or killed. Lt. Crager describes his agency only became aware of Offender Wilson's escape because a Game Warden had overheard radio traffic from George County that Offender Wilson was heading to Jackson County. Lt. Crager advised after being alerted about Offender Wilson he activated a response team to work on locating Offender Wilson.

Lt. Crager and his team expressed a great deal of frustration with SMCI personnel because it seemed to them they did not know what they were doing. Lt. Crager's staff mentioned that SMCI personnel did not provide information and they had to ask all of the questions. Lt. Crager stated they set up a Command Center at a local gas station (close to the area where Offender Wilson was dropped off at). Lt. Crager reported there was no SMCI Command that ever partnered with them at the Command Center. Lt. Crager described incidents where SMCI personnel would just go off and do their own thing.

Lt. Crager and staff reports a great deal of relief that Offender Wilson was found before something bad happened. Lt. Crager advised the Jackson County Sheriffs Office is very familiar with Offender Wilson and his long criminal history. Lt. Crager stated they were advised by SMCI that Offender Wilson had returned to the coastal area to kill a gentleman named of [REDACTED]. Lt. Crager reported [REDACTED] was responsible for turning Offender Wilson into authorities when he killed the two subjects back in 2011.

Lt. Crager advised Sgt. Rick Allen (who is assigned to the U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force) became involved with the search for Offender Wilson and took the lead in the hunt for Offender Wilson. Lt. Crager advised that his agency has a long history of working with the U.S. Marshals Task Force and the Jackson County Sheriffs Office provided any and all resources to Sgt. Allen.

On July 26, 2018 Investigator David Burlison and Investigator Tonya Mangus met with Sgt. Rick Allen. Sgt. Allen is with the Biloxi Police Department and is permanently assigned to the U.S. Marshal Fugitive Task Force. Sgt. Allen was an active participant in the search and eventual apprehension of Offender Wilson.

On July 5, 2018 Sgt. Allen reports he became aware of Offender Wilson's escape (from SMCI) when he received a phone call from MDOC requesting assistance in locating Offender Wilson. Sgt. Allen advises he is familiar with Offender Wilson because Offender Wilson had escaped from MDOC custody once before and he (Sgt. Allen) had "hunted" him the last time. Sgt. Allen states when Offender Wilson was known to be in the Jackson County he became actively involved in the search and apprehension of Offender Wilson.

Sgt. Allen advises he linked up with the Jackson County Sheriffs Office at a local gas station close to the area where Offender Wilson was thought to be dropped off at. Sgt. Allen stated there was some skepticism about whether they were actually in the right area. Sgt. Allen reports [REDACTED] (person who dropped off Offender Wilson) was contacted by phone so they could better pin-point the location. After speaking with [REDACTED] it was determined they were in the wrong location and they moved into the correct area.

Sgt. Allen stated he broke everyone up into teams and they began a coordinated and well rounded

search for Offender Wilson. Sgt. Allen advises there were MDOC personnel in the area but for the most part they did their own "thing". Sgt. Allen states on one occasion there was a report of an Offender Wilson sighting at the local Wal-Mart. Sgt. Allen stated when everyone moved into the area, MDOC took charge of questioning the subjects (who had reported the sighting). Sgt. Allen stated MDOC showed only one photo (Offender Wilson) to the subjects. Sgt. Allen advises the subjects said, "yes that's him". Sgt. Allen stated after further investigation and reviewing video it was determined that it was not Offender Wilson. Sgt. Allen advises there was a significant amount of time wasted on this non-sighting. Sgt. Allen advises if there had been a photo line-up with several targets instead of one, this time (that was wasted) could have been avoided.

Sgt. Allen advised there was a tip that came in of a possible sighting (which was confirmed to be Offender Wilson) in a residential area located in the St. Martin. Sgt. Allen stated his team moved into the area and spoke to the caller. Sgt. Allen advises the caller gave a pretty good description of the person they had spotted including a tattoo description of a shark. Sgt. Allen attempted to confirm with MDOC if Offender Wilson had a shark tattoo. Sgt. Allen reports MDOC had no information of tattoos that Offender Wilson had. Sgt. Allen advises target tattoos are a vital element in confirming identity. (NOTE) Sgt. Allen stated after apprehending Offender Wilson there was a shark tattoo confirmed on Offender Wilson's body.

Sgt. Allen stated Offender Wilson had left the area prior to their arrival. Sgt. Allen stated teams branched out and went door to door searching for Offender Wilson. Sgt. Allen stated as a result of speaking to the residents, when Offender Wilson did return to the area they called and reported his presence. Sgt. Allen stated they flooded the area with law enforcement and Offender Wilson was located and placed into custody.

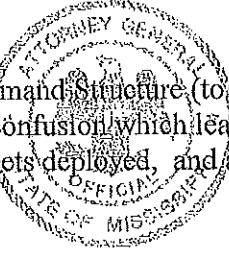
FINDINGS BASED ON INTERVIEWS:

*There was no evidence of any prior cross-training with the Greene County Sheriff's Office or EMA. Also, the limited resources of the Greene County Sheriff's Office does present significant problems with providing an adequate response in the future.

NOTE: IN SPEAKING TO CHIEF SEAN SMITH (MDOC) IT WAS REVEALED THAT SMCI HAS OFFERED TO CROSS TRAIN WITH THE GREENE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE IN THE PAST. CHIEF SMITH ADVISED THE GREENE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE DECLINED THE INVITATION.

* SMCI was unable to effectively communicate with outside agencies. SMCI does not utilize common and known radio frequencies. Having radio communication capabilities with other agencies is a vital tool for giving and receiving time-sensitive information. SMCI does not currently have a Mobil Command Center. Having this asset available during Offender Wilson's escape could have been helpful in centralizing all assisting agencies therefore facilitating better communication.

NOTE: ACCORDING TO CHIEF SMITH FUNDING HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED TO OBTAIN EQUIPMENT UNIFYING COMMUNICATION WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES.

 *SMCI did not display any form of Command Structure (to outside agencies). Not having a Command presence on scene(s) caused confusion which lead to delays in setting up perimeters, notifying agencies, getting additional assets deployed, and assisting with the sharing and dissemination of information.

NOTE: ASSIGNING AN INCIDENT COMMANDER (WHO IS PRESENT ON SCENE)
SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY MDOC.

*SMCI was unaware of Offender Wilson's previous escape (or failed to make this information available). The similarities of Offender Wilson's movements, (after escaping both times) is highly revealing. Had the information of his previous escape been available it potentially could have led to Offender Wilson being located sooner.

*SMCI has not conducted any form of an After Action Review (AAR) with any of the assisting agencies. Conducting an AAR is a common practice that most law enforcement agencies perform after a training exercise or a major event to help improve performance.